

# Community Partnership for Environmental Justice in Rhode Island

**Environmental Justice League  
of Rhode Island**  
*and*

**Brown University Superfund  
Research Program – Community  
Outreach Core**



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# Four Collaborations

- 1) **Healthy Corner Store Initiative** provides greater access to healthy food for Providence residents via makeovers of small grocery and convenience stores
- 2) **Community Environmental College** provides free classes to Providence-area residents of all ages and backgrounds
- 3) **CARE Alliance** - EPA-funded program to bring diverse stakeholders to the table to identify the sources of toxic pollution and environmental hazards in Providence
- 4) **Penalties Bill** raises fines for companies that fail to respond to DEM Notices of Violation



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# Environmental Justice League's Many Community Partnerships

- American Lung Association of Rhode Island
- Childhood Lead Action Project
- Clean Water Action
- Community Asthma Program, Hasbro Children's Hospital
- Community Outreach Core, Brown University Superfund Basic Research Program
- Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE)
- Environment Council of Rhode Island
- Family Life Center
- Hartford Park Residents Association
- Healthy Housing Collaborative (RI DOH)
- RI Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (RICOSH)
- Rhode Island Diesel Pollution Initiative (RIDPI)
- Rhode Island HUD Tenant Project
- Rhode Island Legal Services
- Sierra Club, Rhode Island Chapter
- Toxics Action Center
- Toxics Information Project (TIP)
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council



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# Superfund Community Outreach Core: 3 Funded Partners



- Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island (EJLRI)
  - Outreach Core helped found the non-profit EJLRI in May 2008



- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC)
  - WRWC is working with the EPA to address a dioxin contaminated Superfund site at Centredale Manor.



- Environmental Neighborhood Awareness Committee of Tiverton (ENACT)
  - Neighborhood of North Tiverton contaminated with waste from a coal gasification plant



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# Superfund Community Outreach Core: Other Partners

- Toxics Action Center
- Diesel Pollution Initiative
- Mashapaug Pond Procession/Gorham Silver Co. brownfield
- RI Department of Environmental Management
- RI Department of Health



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# **Superfund Community Outreach Core: Other Integration at Brown**

## **Formative Children's Environmental Health Center**

- launched March 2010
- includes Community Outreach and Translation Core
  - partners:
    - Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island
    - Silent Spring Institute

## **Contested Illness Research Group**

- started 1999
- variety of EJ and CBPR projects (NIEHS, NSF, NIH)
- shared resources, discussions, student & postdoc opportunities



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# Success Story #1

## PENALTIES BILL

### Tiverton Contamination History



- The Fall River Gas Works operated coal gasification plant from 1914 until 1953
- Waste used as fill on developed and undeveloped properties of Bay Street neighborhood
- Southern Union Company, acquired the assets of the New England Gas Company (Fall River Gas Works's parent company) in September 2000
- MGP waste was discovered in the summer of 2002 during a sewer construction project
- The Environmental Neighborhood Awareness Committee of Tiverton (ENACT) was founded in 2002 to mobilize the community to press for a total cleanup



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# Major Impact on Residents

- Property values have plummeted
- Moratorium on digging
- Homes may not be sold
- Home equity loans and lines of credit are impossible to secure
- Difficult to finance minor repairs or unanticipated expenses
- Difficulty in leveraging home equity for educational financing



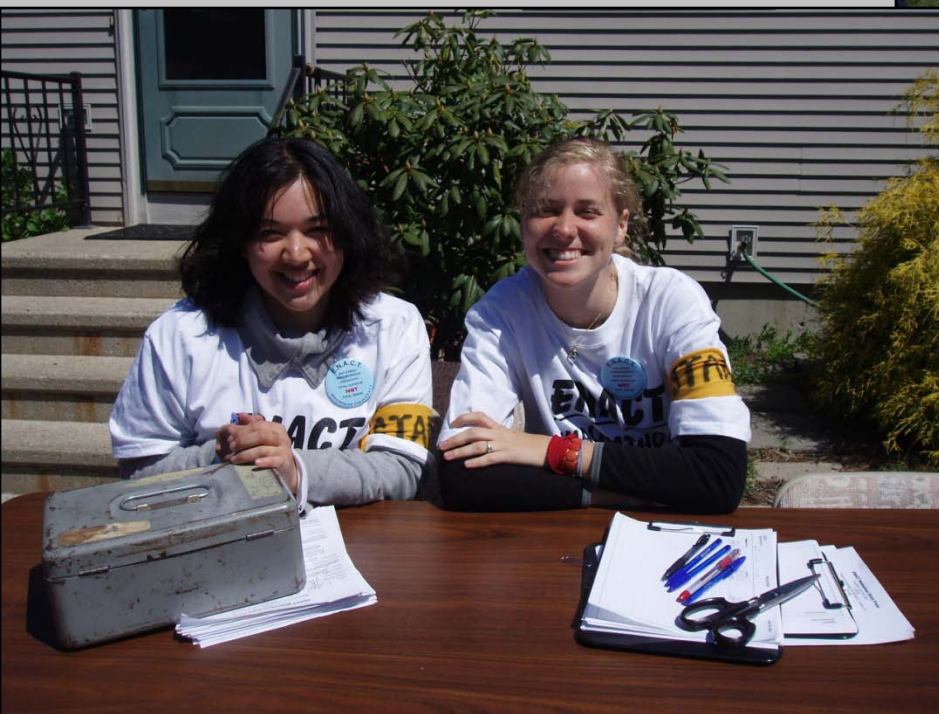
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# 2006 Walkathon



Part of national day of  
action by Center for  
Health, Environment, and  
Justice



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# ENACT-Prior Success: ECHO Home Loan Bill



- SRP and EJ seminar students researched possible legislative and administrative solutions

- Local legislators decided the most expeditious option was to amend the enabling legislation for the Rhode Island Housing Corporation

- Environmentally Compromised Homeownership Loan Program drafted, filed, and passed in the summer of 2006

Makes loans of up to \$25,000 available to homeowners living on or directly abutting a site that has been certified by RIDEM as “known to be impacted by the release of hazardous materials or petroleum.”

Reducing financial burden of discovering contaminated land



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# ENACT-Another Success: Cleanup Settlement

- Settlement with Southern Union Gas Co. summer 2009
- Cleanup began fall 2009
- Many snags along the way in cleanup process



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# ENACT-Recent Success: Penalties Bill – June 2009

-EJLRI and Community Outreach Core worked with:

- other environmental groups
- RI Department of Environmental Management
- state legislators

-Raises fines from \$1,000/day to \$25,000/day for companies that fail to obey DEM Notice of Violation

-Preventing Tiverton's tragedy from happening elsewhere in Rhode Island



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# Success Story #2

## Community Environmental College

- **Eight-week classes** on environmental issues
- **Public lecture series**
- **The Science Café:** public bi-monthly science presentations by faculty and students, held in coffee shops and other nonacademic venues
- **The After School Teen Video Program** (with Media Youth Television) helping students learn to create videos about local environmental problems.
- **The Readers Theater Program:** a forum for writing, performing and discussing scripts about environmental issues.
- **Bookmobile/media library** of video and printed material available to community residents on general environmental issues and environmental justice.



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# COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL COLLEGE

Pilot "EJ 101" Course  
Summer 2009



## "Environmental Justice 101"

- 9 wk course for Providence high schoolers

### Curriculum:

- Basics of EJ, activism, and organizing
- Four specific topics: 1) air pollution, 2) food justice, 3) toxics, and 4) connections between global and local issues.

### Student-Led Group Project:

- Students created an action plan for an issue about which they felt passionately.
- Focusing on food justice (access to healthy food and the way our food is made and delivered), the students created a YouTube video.

### Continued Involvement:

- Attendance at EJLRI meetings
- Preparations for "TA" positions next summer



The students' Food Justice  
YouTube video:

<http://tinyurl.com/ygpz6r7>

The CEC is a joint effort between  
SRP's Community Outreach Core  
and the Environmental Justice  
League of Rhode Island (EJLRI).



# Community Environmental College “Room by Room”



**Environmental design course  
taught by RISD faculty member  
on our Outreach Core –summer 2009**

**Students learned about environmental  
health threats in their own homes,  
along with interior design principles  
for a healthy and beautiful living  
environment**

**At the final show, students presented  
drawings, renderings, and physical  
objects they had created in their design  
process**



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# Environmental Justice 101 →

tuesdays and thursdays  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
june 29th to august 19th

During the course, you will learn about Environmental Justice issues affecting your communities, such as:

air pollution  
access to healthy food  
exposure to toxics

We'll take trips, have discussions, and work with many of the different community groups in our city. Then you'll pick an issue to focus on, and come up with an action plan to address it!

Sign up online at  
[www.ejlri.wordpress.com](http://www.ejlri.wordpress.com)  
or call  
(401) 383-7441

field trips. community  
organizing. college prep.  
creative expression.

After completing the course,  
each student will receive:

a \$100 stipend  
a certificate from  
the CEC

How many summer camps do  
you know that will pay YOU?

tuesdays and thursdays  
2 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
june 29th to august 19th

During the course, we  
will answer the follow-  
ing questions about  
Food Justice:

how is our food  
produced?  
how does it get  
to us?  
who has access  
to what?  
how do food justice  
issues affect our health?

Food Justice



# Food Justice Course

**By popular demand**

**Linkage to our Healthy Corner Store Initiative**

**Will employ some of last summer's students as teaching assistants**



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# Community Environmental College Additions starting Summer/Fall 2010

- **Public lecture series**
- **The After School Teen Video Program** (with Media Youth Television) helping students learn to create videos about local environmental problems.
- **The Readers Theater Program:** a forum for writing, performing and discussing scripts about environmental issues.
- **Bookmobile/media library** of video and printed material available to community residents on general environmental issues and environmental justice.



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# Community Environmental College Science Cafes

## **Year 1 (current)**

- Food security and food justice
- Composting
- Safe Cosmetics
- Battling Climate Change at Home
- Childhood Lead Poisoning
- Green Cleaning Products
- Rhode Island Environmental Legislation

## **Year 2 (starting fall 2010)**

- Climate change and climate justice
- Alternatives to household toxics
- Others to be determined



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# Science Cafes



## Figuring out our world... together

Come learn about the hot environmental issues of today from regional experts. Join us for an All-Ages Happy Hour at AS220!

What's the difference between local and organic? How do they relate to 'food justice' and the food systems of Rhode Island?

Join Kathy DeMaster, Visiting Professor at Brown University, and other community members to discuss these topics!

AS220 (115 Empire St.)

Monday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5:30 pm

# Success Story #3

## CARE Alliance

EPA grant provides \$100,000 to EJLRI

(Community Outreach Core played key role in writing proposal)

- Complete Stage One of CARE Grant: Environmental Health Assessment and Developing Comprehensive Understanding of Toxic Exposures for Providence residents.
- Write successful Stage Two CARE Grant to provide funds for four or five years.
- Use CARE Grant to link EJLRI with more RI advocacy groups in RI by sharing environmental health data
- Use CARE Grant to build stronger relationships between advocacy groups and the Department of Health, which has interest in much of the same environmental health data

# CARE Alliance



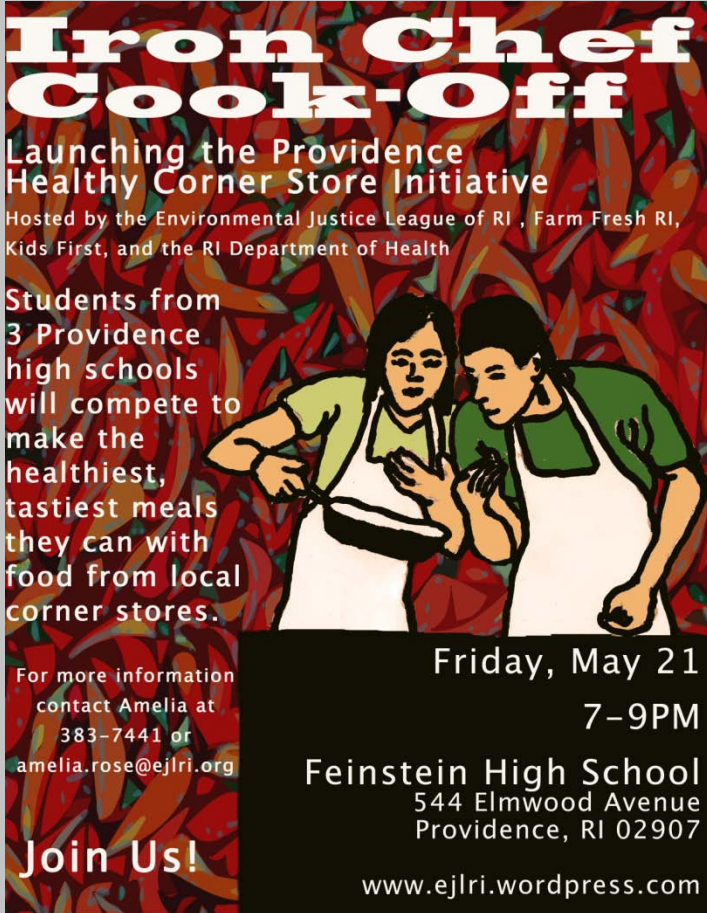


# Success Story #4

## Healthy Corner Store Initiative

- Working with 3 Providence high schools
- Already identified 3 storeowners that want to make specific, practical changes in their stores to increase stock of healthy food
- Students are conducting customer surveys and resident surveys to identify healthy foods people want to buy
- Launching the initiative in May with an Iron Chef competition

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A poster for the 'Iron Chef Cook-Off' event. The background is a vibrant, abstract pattern of red and orange leaves. In the center, there is a stylized illustration of two young people, a girl and a boy, wearing white aprons over green shirts. The girl is on the left, holding a frying pan, and the boy is on the right, looking at her. The text is overlaid on the image in various fonts and colors.

**Iron Chef  
Cook-Off**

Launching the Providence  
Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Hosted by the Environmental Justice League of RI, Farm Fresh RI,  
Kids First, and the RI Department of Health

Students from  
3 Providence  
high schools  
will compete to  
make the  
healthiest,  
tastiest meals  
they can with  
food from local  
corner stores.

For more information  
contact Amelia at  
383-7441 or  
amelia.rose@ejlri.org

**Join Us!**

Friday, May 21  
7-9PM

**Feinstein High School**  
544 Elmwood Avenue  
Providence, RI 02907

[www.ejlri.wordpress.com](http://www.ejlri.wordpress.com)

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# Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Most healthy changes will be implemented over the summer with store “makeovers” but we’ve already had success getting local produce into participating stores





# What Links these 4 examples?

- Environmental justice-centered, community-based, policy-oriented, and research driven
- Diverse strategies for increasing awareness and making change, based on underlying commitment to utilizing community and university assets to tackle community-identified concerns



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# Contact us

- <http://ejlri.wordpress.com>
- <http://brown.edu/Research/SRP>
- [www.brown.edu/contestedillnesses](http://www.brown.edu/contestedillnesses)
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